

REPORT
OF THE
UNITED PROVINCES
WOMEN'S JAIL COMMITTEE
1946



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Report of the U. P. Women's Jail Committee, 1946

The Women's Jail Committee was appointed in Home Department (Jails) G. O. no. 4973/XXII—1414-48, dated October 19, 1946. It was originally named "Female Prison Committee" but this name was subsequently changed to "Women's Jail Committee". The personnel was as follows:

Appoint-
ment of the
Committee.

Chairman

- (1) Shri Govind Sahai, Parliamentary Secretary, to Hon'ble Minister (Jails).

Members

- (2) Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani, Allahabad.
(3) Sushri Sarala Devi, Kausani, Almora.
(4) Shrimati Sajjan Devi Mahnot, M.L.A., Banaras.
(5) Shrimati Purnima Banerji, M.L.A., Allahabad.
(6) Begum Aizaz Rasool, M.L.C., Lucknow.

Member-Secretary

- (7) Lieut. Col. G. R. Oberai, Officer on Special Duty, Home Department (Jails).

On the appointment of Colonel Oberai as Inspector General of Prisons, Shri Narsingh Narain, Deputy Secretary, Home Department was appointed Member-Secretary of the Committee, Colonel Oberai being retained as a member.

2. The terms of reference of the Committee as laid down in the letter of appointment were as follows:

Terms of
reference.

- (1) Whether there is need for the establishment of a female jail for the concentration of all women prisoners. If so—
(2) Where should the jail be located.
(3) The staff necessary for running the jail.
(4) Any reformatory measures to be adopted to prevent the prisoners from relapsing into crime;
(5) The probable recurring and non-recurring cost of the scheme.

3. Six meetings of the Committee were held, on February 12, 1947, May 29, 1947, May 30, 1947, June 3, 1947, June 7, 1947 and August 23, 1947. At the first meeting the main business transacted was the adoption of a questionnaire. The meetings on May 29, 1947 and June 2, 1947 had to be postponed for want of quorum. The questions referred to the Committee were thus discussed at three meetings only, namely those held on May 30, 1947, June 7, 1947 and August 20, 1947.

Meetings
the Commit-
tee.

4. The questionnaire was issued to eleven ladies of whom only three, namely Shrimati Uma Nehru, Mrs. E. A. Ledlie, formerly a matron in the Jail Department and Sushri V. Kamalambal, M.A., L.T., Head Mistress, Government High School for Girls, Banaras, sent in replies. A reply was also obtained from Lt. Col. R. N. Bhandari, I. M. S., Superintendent, Central Prison, Naini. A copy of the Questionnaire as drawn up by the Committee is given in Appendix A.

Question-
naire.

5. The attendance of non-official members of the Committee was as follows :

Shrimati Sajjan Devi Mahnot—3, Shrimati Purnima Banerji—2, Sushri Sarala Devi and Begum Aizaz Rasool, 1 each and Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani—none.

Existing position regarding women prisoners.

6. The existing position regarding the detention of women prisoners is summarised below :

(1) In the central prisons at Agra, Bareilly and Fatehgarh and the districts jails at Banaras and Lucknow, there is no accommodation for women prisoners. In other central prisons and district jails women prisoners, both convicted and undertrial, are kept in the same building as men prisoners but in separate wards which are so situated and constructed that the women prisoners are rigidly secluded from men prisoners so as to prevent their seeing or conversing or holding any intercourse with the latter; and the female ward is not visible from any part of the main jail. In some of the jails separate main gates for the women prisoners have also been provided.

(2) Prisoners are divided into the following age groups :

Juveniles—those under 16 years of age ;

Adolescents—those from 16 to 20 years of age ;

Adults—those over 20 years of age.

(3) The following classes of prisoners are kept apart from one another :

(a) Unconvicted from convicted prisoners; juveniles and adolescents from adult prisoners; habitual from non-habitual prisoners; and prostitutes and procuresses from respectable women.

(b) Superior class under trial or convicted prisoners are, where possible, kept apart from ordinary prisoners.

(4) Undertrial prisoners and adult casual convicts with sentences of 4 months or less, are confined in the jails to which they are committed. Exception is made in the case of the Naini Central Prison, in view of (6) below, from where all adult casual women convicts with sentences of four months or less are transferred to the Banaras Central Prison.

(5) Juveniles and Adolescents, both casual and habitual, are kept in the Lucknow Central Prison.

(6) Other habituals, and prostitutes and procuresses are kept in the Naini Central Prison.

(7) Casual adults are kept in the Banaras Central Prison.

(8) Convicts under sentences of death are kept in Mathura District Jail.

7. The female population of all central and district jails in the United Provinces in the months of January, February, March and April, 1947, is given below :

The question of a separate Central Jail for women.

Date	No. of convicted prisoners					No. of under trials
	Naini Central Prison	Banaras Central Prison	Lucknow Central Prison	Other District and Central Jails	Total	
January 31, 1947 ..	35	97	25	22	179	108
February 28, 1947 ..	83	100	25	23	181	91
March 31, 1947 ..	32	101	25	26	184	81
April 30, 1947 ..	81	101	24	21	177	166
Average	83	100	25	23	180	109

It will be observed that the average number of women convicts confined in the three Central Prisons of Banaras, Naini and Lucknow is 100 and 33 and 25 respectively. These figures may be taken to be near about the normal. With such small numbers, particularly those at Naini and Lucknow, it is not possible to do much for the reform of women convicts or to provide any special medical or other facilities for their benefit. But this could be done if all women convicts, who are at present distributed over these three central prisons, were concentrated in one central prison, specially meant for them.

8. Another argument in favour of a separate women's jail is that although the rules enjoin a rigid seclusion of women prisoners from any contact with male prisoners, in practice this is not always possible. Women prisoners have to be brought to the jail office to have their particulars entered in the jail registers. The food for the women's ward is cooked in the men's jail and conveyed to the gate of the female enclosure by men prisoners. In an emergency owing to the paucity of the woman staff, men have to be detailed to the women's section.

9. Separate jails for women exist in some other provinces. We have received from the Inspectors General of Prisons of the Punjab and Bombay some details about these jails. In Bombay the Women's Jail is situated at Yeravda but from the account given by the Inspector General, it would appear that this jail is more like an appendage to the Central Prison at Yeravda than an independent self-contained unit. In the first place, the Women's Jail has accommodation for 126 prisoners only, and women prisoners are also kept in separate yards attached to all central prisons and to some district jails. Secondly, the Yeravda Women's Jail is under the charge of a senior matron who works

Women Jail at Yeravda.

under the supervision not only of the superintendent but also of the senior jailor of the Central Prison which is 200 yard away. The senior Matron is a qualified doctor (L. C. P. C.) but her medical work again is done under the supervision of the Medical Officer of the Central Prison. The hospital in the Women's Jail also gets its supply of medicines from the Central Prison Hospital. Thirdly, no separate stocks of rations or raw materials are kept in the Women's Jail which obtains its supplies from the Central Prison. The Bombay system, therefore, does not really differ much from that obtaining in the United Provinces. One important difference is that in Bombay the distribution of women prisoners to the various central prisons is made on a regional basis, while in the United Provinces different categories of prisoners are assigned to separate central prisons and in this respect the United Provinces system seems to be preferable. In fact, it must be reckoned as a disadvantage of concentrating all women convicts in one building, even though in separate wards, that the habituals and other undesirables among them may have opportunities of mixing with the casuals or the juveniles though the classroom, the hospital, etc. For, if, the different categories are to be rigidly segregated from one another, separate arrangements will have to be made for their education, training, etc. and the advantage of having them all at one place would largely disappear.

**Women's Jail
Lahore.**

10. In the Punjab, however, there is a single women's jail at Lahore "where all adult female convicts under sentence for a term of four months or over are confined". The superintendent, the clerical staff, the gate-keepers and the warders guarding outside the main wall are men; the rest of the staff are women and include one sub-assistant surgeon, one dispenser and two teachers who impart elementary education. Rations are stored in the Borstal Institution and Juvenile Jail, but raw materials for factories are purchased and stored in the Women's Jail. The main industries taught are embroidery, *nawar* making, *naqthi* thread making and spinning of cotton yarn.

11. As has been mentioned already, the largest number of long-term women convicts is at present concentrated at Banaras, where the average population is 100. At the other two central prisons, viz. Naini and Lucknow, the average population is only 33 and 25, respectively. The Committee considered whether it might be possible to arrange for the concentration of all long-term convicts at Banaras by extending and improving the buildings where women convicts are detained there. Some members of the Committee had seen these buildings and they were unanimous that they are entirely unsuitable to serve as a basis for a Women's Central Jail on modern lines.

12. The Committee are of opinion that the balance of advantage lies definitely in having a central jail for women which should be established at Lucknow, it being the most central place in the Province. The Committee are further of opinion that the proposed Women's Central Jail at Lucknow should be located at a sufficient distance from the Central Prison so as to avoid any contact between the two prisons as far possible.

**Undertrials
and short-
term
prisoners.**

13. One view expressed before the Committee was that all convicted prisoners, whatever their term of imprisonment, should be sent to the proposed central jail. A member of the Committee speaking

from personal experience, stated that "unhappy as is the life of convicted women prisoners, it is as nothing compared with the life of these under trial women", and suggested that women undertrials should be sent to concentration barracks specially built for them at convenient centres. She also stated that to her "certain knowledge" women undertrials sometimes had to remain in prison for about 28 months. The Committee, while deploring this state of affairs, are of opinion that it would not be practicable to keep undertrial women prisoners at a place other than that where their cases are heard, as that would involve too many journeys by rail or otherwise. Further, it frequently happens that a case is merely postponed to the next following day, or proceeds from day to day. In that case it would be necessary to detain the undertrial woman at the place where the trial is taking place, and it would generally be impossible to make any satisfactory arrangement for her stay there. The Committee, however, strongly recommend that effective steps should be taken by Government to ensure the speedy disposal of cases in which any woman undertrial prisoner is involved. The desirability of releasing women prisoners on bail liberally may again be impressed on courts.

14. The Committee further recommend that steps should be taken to appoint one or more non-official lady visitors in every district to visit and otherwise keep in touch with the female sections of the district jails and thereby help the local authorities to remove the grievances of women undertrials and short-term convicts in district jails.

15. As regards short-term convicts also (i.e. those with sentences of 4 months or less) the Committee are of opinion that it would not be worthwhile to transfer them to the proposed central jail. It would seldom be possible to send a woman out straightaway on conviction. A police escort has to be arranged, which often takes time. The rules also require that a woman convict under 40 years of age, whether travelling alone or in the company of other women convicts, must be accompanied by a woman warder. The number of women warders is so small (owing to the small number of women prisoners) that one may not be available at the time required. The rules also require that every woman convict should be transferred to her home district ten days before the date of her release. It would thus be seen that a good part of a short-term prisoner's sentence would be occupied in journeys or waiting, and during the short time that she could spend in the central jail it would be difficult to do anything substantial to reform or teach her. Another consideration is that their concentration in a central jail would necessarily deprive many of them of facilities for having interviews with their relations. This would be a hardship without any compensating advantage. It may be mentioned that in the Punjab also short-term prisoners are not sent to the women's central jail (the Bombay report is silent on the point). The Committee think that the existing system under which short-term convicts are detained in the districts of their trial should continue. It is hoped that the non-official lady visitors whose appointment is recommended in paragraph 14 will help short-term convicts by bringing any legitimate grievances of theirs to the notice of the superintendent.

16. The Committee agree with the existing rules about classification of prisoners and the segregation of different categories of prisoners from one another, as set forth in paragraph 6 of this report. But it is recommended that if the Lady Superintendent in-charge of the Women's Central Jail considers, after a study of the history of any individual prisoner and her behaviour in the jail, that she should be grouped with a class different from that to which she belongs, she may make a recommendation to this effect to the Inspector General of Prisons stating her reasons, and the Inspector General of Prisons should be empowered to pass such orders as he may deem fit.

association
barracks
barracks
aparte
cells.

17. One of the suggestions placed before the Committee was that every woman prisoner should be lodged in a separate cell for the night. It appears that association barracks lead to a certain type of sexual perversity. The Committee, after carefully considering the matter, have come to the conclusion that on the whole it is more desirable, besides being more economical, to keep prisoners generally in association barracks. The Committee, however, recommend that prisoners whose presence in the barracks is particularly fraught with the danger of spread of unhealthy practices should be removed to separate cells. There will also be other prisoners, whose detention in separate cells will be considered desirable. Separate cells should therefore be provided on a more liberal scale than at present, and if possible some small association barracks should also be built;

stocks of
rations
and Raw-
materials.

18. At present no stocks of rations or raw materials are kept in the women's section anywhere. Cooked food is carried from the men's section to the gate of the women's enclosure by men convicts accompanied by warders. In the Yeravda Central Jail for women (in the Bombay Presidency) also stocks of rations and raw materials are kept in the Central Prison, *vide* paragraph 9 above. In the Punjab, as already mentioned in paragraph 10 the stock of rations is not kept in the women's jail but raw materials for industries are kept there.

19. The Committee consider that stocks of rations should be kept in the Central Prison for men near which the women's central jail will be located and supplies should be sent to the latter once or twice a month. Green vegetable should, however, be supplied daily. The women's jail should have its own cook-house, manned entirely by women. It is interesting to note that the Thana District Prison in the Bombay Presidency which has an average population of about 750, has its food cooked entirely in the women's section attached to the prison. The cooking as well as the subsidiary work, such as the cleaning of grain and the cutting of vegetables is done by women prisoners.

Children.

20. Under the existing rules women convicts are allowed to keep with them in jail their children up to the age of 6 years. In the Banaras Central Prison, which has the largest population of women convicts, a trained nurse is employed to keep and look after such of the children as are old enough to be separated from their mothers. The Committee recommend that in the proposed women's central jail a separate enclosure should be provided for children who should remain under the care of the nurse-in-charge all day, but should be sent to sleep at night with their mothers.

21. The Committee recommend that separate accommodation should be provided for prisoners suffering from mental aberration not amounting to insanity in a certifiable form. Provision should be made for special treatment of such cases, and if considered necessary, a psychological expert should be consulted.

Mentally
deficient
prisoners.

22. The existing scales of clothing for ordinary convicts are given below :

Clothing.

Cotton clothing

Two *saries*.
Two *kurties*.
Two *kurtas*.
Two towels.
One *chadar*.

Woollen Clothing

Summer (from April 1 to September 30) one blanket.

Winter (from October 1 to March 31) two blankets and one blanket coat. But when it is excessively cold, a third blanket shall be supplied to every prisoner confined in jails in the plains. It should not, however, be necessary to issue this extra blanket for more than three months in the winter.

23. The Committee recommend that the number of *saries* should be increased from two to three and the number of *chadars* from one to two. They also recommend that three *janghies* and in winter, one full-sleeve pullover (in place of blanket coat) should be provided. In the hills the pullover should be in addition to the blanket coat.

24. Women prisoners are usually employed on repair of clothing and cleaning of grain. Wherever possible instruction is given to them in needle work, knitting and other domestic occupations. Their employment on grinding grain or other irksome labour is prohibited. In the Punjab the main industries taught are embroidery, *newar* making, *nathi* thread making and spinning of cotton yarn; they are not to be employed on the grinding of grains except as a punishment. In Bombay also the industries taught are much the same, namely weaving, tag making, sewing, knitting and embroidery. The Committee recommend that weaving, spinning (together with all its preparatory processes), sewing, knitting and embroidery should be the main industries in our Women's Central Jail. If possible, arrangements should also be made for the teaching of nursing, midwifery and child care, cooking of better type of food used in well-to-do families, and toy-making.

Labour or
vocational
training.

25. The Committee are in favour of the principle of giving prisoners a reward proportionate to their exertion and of rendering it available for them in as tangible and concrete a form as is consistent with jail discipline. We therefore recommend that a system of payment of wages to prisoners should be introduced in the women's jail under which each convict should receive a fixed sum of money when it has been certified that she has done her work satisfactorily. We consider that a monthly payment to the convict from her earnings for immediate expenditure subject to jail rules will have a stimulating

Payment of
wages to
prisoners

effect, but at the same time a substantial part of the earnings should be allowed to accumulate to be handed over to the convict on release.

Education.

26. In the Punjab all that is done by way of educating the prisoners in the women's jail is that two lady teachers are employed to impart elementary education. In Bombay also there are two lady teachers as in the Punjab but they visit the jail only twice a week. In our own Province one lady teacher is employed in each of the three places, Banaras, Lucknow and Naini. The Committee consider that the number of teachers to be employed for the proposed women's jail should also be two and recommend that the teachers should be at least Hindustani Middle passed and trained in the Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram. They should also be fully conversant with the language of the Province. The Committee further recommend that women prisoners whose term of detention is long enough to enable them to prepare for any recognised examination should be given every facility and encouragement to do so. They should be permitted to sit for the examination whether inside or outside the jail.

Religious
and moral
instruction.

27. The existing provisions are summed up below :

Every prisoner is allowed to say his prayers or perform his devotions inside the jail, but no congregation for the purpose is permitted. Prisoners are also permitted to retain permanently in their possession two religious books of their own. Women prisoners may be allowed by the superintendent to keep a larger number of such books. The district magistrate is authorised to appoint honorary teachers in religious and moral subjects and subjects of general utility to prisoners. The Committee do not think that such instruction in religion and ethics as it may be practicable to secure is likely to produce any real effect on the prisoners. What is required is a better and cleaner atmosphere, and sympathetic advice or guidance when needed. The Committee, therefore, do not recommend any further provision for moral or religious teaching of a formal nature.

Interviews.

28. The Committee are not satisfied with the existing arrangements regarding interviews, which do not secure sufficient privacy for conversation between the prisoner and her relatives. The Committee recommend that steps should be taken to remedy this defect.

Additional
amenities.

29. In the Women's Jail, Lahore, a library is maintained at Government expense from which books are issued to literate prisoners. Some newspapers and periodicals are also supplied. In the Yeravada Women's Jail, one book at a time can be issued to a woman prisoner from the library of the Central Prison. The Committee recommend that the proposed women's jail should have a separate library of its own as in the case of the Women's Jail at Lahore.

30. The Committee recommend that in the case of serious illness of their children or other near relations, women prisoners should be more liberally released on parole than men.

31. We recommend that a canteen to supply simple articles of necessity should be opened in the Women's jail and the prisoners should be permitted to spend up to 50 percent of their earnings in purchasing articles from it.

Staff.

32. It has been mentioned in paragraph 10 that in the Women's Jail at Lahore the superintendent, the clerical staff, the gate-keepers

and the warders who guard outside the main wall are men. The women's staff includes a sub-assistant surgeon, a dispenser and two trachars. In the Yeravda Women's Jail, which has been described in paragraph 9, one senior matron and two assistant matrons work under the supervision of the superintendent and the senior jailor of the central prison.

33. The Committee recommend the following staff for the proposed women's central jail ;

(1) One lady superintendent who should be a graduate in medicine and surgery and well acquainted with the language of the Province.

(2) Two matrons with the following qualifications :

(a) Should be at least Intermediate passed,

(b) Age above 30 years.

(c) Preference should be given to those qualified in nursing or holding a diploma in mid-wifery.

(3) Two women clerks

(4) Women gate-keepers.

(5) Women warders who should have read up to the 8th standard of Anglo-Hindustani schools.

(6) Warders guarding outside the jail should be men.

(7) Two qualified nurses of whom one, who should be specially qualified in nursing, will be attached to the hospital and the other who should have received training in child-care on the Montessori system will look after the children of the prisoners as recommended in paragraph 20.

34. The financial aspect of our recommendations is given in Appendix B of this report.

GOVINDSAHAI
SARALA DEVI
BEGUM AIZAZ RASUL
SAJJAN DEVI MAHNOT*
G. R. OBERAI
N. NABAIN

*Subject to the following notes :

(1) Government should maintain the minor children of those widow undertrials and prisoners who are over 6 years old and have no near relations to look after them.

(2) If Government cannot at present allot sufficient funds for the construction of a new Women's Central Jail at Lucknow, necessary additions and alterations should be carried out in the women's section of the Central Jail at Banaras to make it serve as a separate central jail for women for the whole Province.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you consider that the present arrangements for dealing with women prisoners are satisfactory? If not, in what respects do you consider them unsatisfactory?

2. Do you advocate the opening of separate women's central prison or prisons in the Province? If so, what advantages do you consider will accrue therefrom?

3. Do you consider that such advantages will outweigh the inconvenience caused to the relations of the inmates of the jail or jails in the matter of interviews?

4. Do you consider that all long-term women prisoners should be confined in one women's jail or that there should be separate concentration-jails for different categories of women prisoners?

5. If you are in favour of the opening of a separate jail or jails for women, where do you consider such jail or jails can suitably be opened?

6. What are your views regarding the plan according to which the women's jail or jails should be constructed? Do you consider that prisoners should be accommodated in the night in association barracks or in separate cells?

7. Do you consider that the women's jail or jails should, for the purpose of obtaining their supplies of rations, etc. be attached to an existing jail or whether they should make their own independent arrangements?

8. In case separate women's jails are started, what administrative machinery would you suggest for their administration?

9. Do you consider that the staff in these jails should be composed of women officials?

10. What special medical arrangements do you consider should be made for women's jails?

11. What special arrangements would you suggest for the detention of women undertrials?

12. What method of classification do you advocate should be adopted in the case of women prisoners?

13. What special arrangements would you suggest for the accommodation and treatment of prisoners suffering from mental aberration not amounting to insanity in a certifiable form?

14. Do you consider the existing scales of diet and clothing prescribed in the Jail Manual adequate? If not, in what respects do you consider they should be altered?

15. On what forms of labour do you consider women prisoners should be employed?

16. Do you advocate the introduction of the wage system in women's jail or jails?

17. Do you advocate the introduction of vocational training in the jails? If so, suggest the particular arts and crafts.

18. Do you suggest that any additional amenities should be provided for women prisoners?

19. Do you advocate the introduction of the panchayat system in women's jails?

20. Do you consider that the remission system and the rules regarding premature releases should be more liberal in the case of women? If so, in what respects?

21. What form of compulsory education do you consider should be introduced among women prisoners?

22. What form of moral and religious instruction should be imparted to prisoners in women's jails?

23. What arrangements do you propose should be made for the interview of prisoners?

24. Do you consider that children should be separated from their mothers in jail or that they should be permitted to live with them?

25. If you are in favour of allowing children to stay with their mothers, what arrangements do you suggest should be made for their stay in jail?

26. Have you any suggestions to offer regarding the inspection of women's jails by visitors—official and non-official?



APPENDIX B

Statement showing expenditure of the proposed Women's Jail

(a) RECURRING EXPENDITURE

PAY OF OFFICER

		Rs.		Amount Rs. a. p.
1. One Lady Superintendent	..	1×12×750	..	9,000 0 0

ESTABLISHMENT

1. Two lady teachers	..	2×12×53	..	1,908 0 0
2. Two matrons	..	2×12×123	..	2,952 0 0
3. Two women clerks	..	2×12×98	..	2,352 0 0
4. Three women gate-keepers	..	3×12×40	..	1,440 0 0
5. Fifteen women warders	..	15×12×40	..	7,200 0 0
6. Two nurses	..	2×12×89	..	2,136 0 0
7. Six male warders	..	6×12×40	..	2,880 0 0
Total	..		..	20,868 0 0

ALLOWANCES AND HONORARIA

1. Dearness allowance	..	..	..	3,200 0 0
2. Travelling allowance	..	..	..	1,500 0 0
3. Charges for moving prisoners	..	..	..	1,000 0 0
Total	..		..	5,700 0 0

CONTINGENCIES

1. Contract	..	..	..	600 0 0
2. Dietary	..	..	..	49,700 0 0
3. Hospital	..	..	..	4,000 0 0
4. Clothing	..	..	..	5,000 0 0
5. Sanitation	..	..	..	2,000 0 0
6. Live-stock, tools and plants	..	..	..	200 0 0
7. Miscellaneous	7,000 0 0
Total	68,500 0 0

JAIL MANUFACTURES

1. Purchase of raw material	1,500 0 0
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WORKS

1. Petty and electrical works	2,000 0 0
2. Maintenance and repairs	500 0 0
Total	..		..	2,500 0 0

GRAND TOTAL

.. 1,08,068 0 0

(b)

1. Jail buildings	..	..	..	7,00,000 0 0
2. Dietary (purchase of utensils, etc.)	..	..	..	20,000 0 0
3. Hospital equipment	..	..	..	8,000 0 0
Total	..		..	7,28,000 0 0